

THE DECLINE OF THE UNITED STATES AS A WORLD POWER

by James E. Dornan, Jr.

Dr. James E. Dornan, Jr., is associate professor and chairman of the department of politics at the Catholic University of America, and senior political scientist at the Strategic Studies Center, Stanford Research Institute. He received a B.A. magna cum laude from Le Moyne College and a Ph.D. from the Johns Hopkins University, both in political science.

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During America's bicentennial year most of us became reacquainted with much of the lofty and often inspiring rhetoric associated with this nation's political past. A re-reading of that rhetoric reveals that it contains many themes and messages, but clearly among the most important of these is the assertion that the United States is a nation with a special mission to perform in human history.

Thus it was with John Winthrop's 1630 assertion that the new colony of Massachusetts Bay would be "as a city upon a hill, the eyes of all people are upon us." In a similar vein, John Adams told a friend in 1765: "I always consider the settlement of America with reverence and wonder, as the opening of a grand scene and design in Providence for the illumination of the ignorant and the emancipation of the slavish part of mankind all over the earth."

Such convictions as these have been expressed frequently throughout the nation's history: statesmen with political outlooks as divergent as those of Alexander Hamilton and Woodrow Wilson have been seized by the belief that the American system would become the political model for the entire world, and that American power might be a key factor in the establishment of new and just political orders in every corner of the globe. In modern times perhaps the two most characteristic formulations of these convictions are F.D.R.'s call to the American people to join in an undertaking to "afford assurance that all men in all the lands may live out their lives in freedom from fear and want," and the stirring hyperbole of John F. Kennedy's first inaugural address, "let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty." Since the birth of the American nation, our statesmen and our people alike have viewed the United States as fashioning both a democratic political system which others could and should copy to their benefit, and a great nation capable of wielding the power requisite to assist in advancing the cause of freedom around the world.

It was no accident that I concluded the litany of statements proclaiming America's global mission with a quotation from John Kennedy. In many ways the early 1960s represent the high-water mark of the American spirit of mission, both with respect to the proclaiming rhetoric and the power which we were capable of wielding in support of that rhetoric. Concern over a "missile gap" favoring the Soviet Union which had so alarmed Americans in the late 1950s was quickly succeeded, after Kennedy's inauguration, by a growing awareness both here and abroad that the United States possessed overwhelming strategic superiority over our principal adversary. It was that superiority which enabled us to turn back the Soviet challenge to Berlin in 1961 and to face down the U.S.S.R. in the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, the latter in most respects a humiliating defeat for the Soviets.

But the early 1960s have become an almost forgotten memory. It is my thesis that the United States no longer possesses the power to face down the Soviet Union, should a crisis of the Berlin or Cuba type arise in the future. It is my further contention that if trends now extant long continue, the United States will lose its ability to protect even its vital interests in Europe and in Northeast Asia, and perhaps ultimately lose its ability to protect the nation's security itself. The United States, in short, is in decline as a world power, and that decline is more advanced than we would like to believe.

The Military Balance

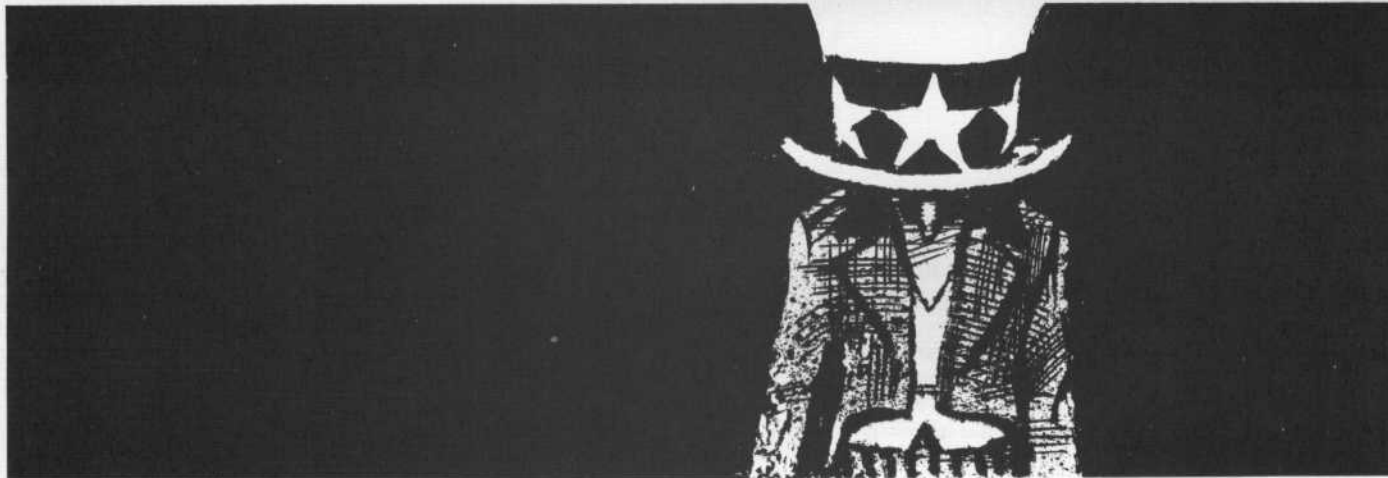
Evidence concerning the decline of the United States as a world power is not difficult to discover. Let us first investigate the military balance between the United States and its principal adversary, the U.S.S.R., a topic which in recent years has received considerable media attention. It is worth remembering that the state of the military balance is not merely a matter of abstract calculations of interest only to the Pentagon, but rather, as we shall see, is of concern to us

im•pri•mis (im•pri' mīs) adv. In the first place. Middle English, from Latin in primis, among the first (things). . .

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all, because it is directly related to the ability of the United States to protect its interests and fulfill its commitments abroad, and ultimately to protect its own security.

First, let us examine strategic forces. The American public repeatedly has been reminded during the past five years that under the force levels established by the SALT I Accords, the U.S.S.R. is guaranteed a substantial advantage over the United States in strategic missiles of both the land-based and the sea-launched variety. At present, the U.S.S.R. deploys more than 1500 ICBMs to 1,054 for the United States, and 845 SLBMs in 78 submarines to 656 in 41 submarines for the United States. This should be compared with the situation which existed as recently as 1966, when the U.S. led 904 to 292 in ICBMs and 592 to 107 in SLBMs. While the United States possesses a substantial but diminishing lead in long-range strategic bombers—452 to approximately 210 for the U.S.S.R.—the Soviet Union has gained an even more substantial advantage over the United States in numbers of deployed sea-launched cruise missiles of all types, 600 to only a handful for the U.S. The Russian missiles are mostly short-range and were originally designed as anti-ship weapons; although they do not constitute a major part of the Soviet strategic arsenal, they can strike an area containing 60 percent of the U.S. population and a large portion of American industry, and we presently have no effective defense against them.



Moreover, it is often argued that significant U.S. advantages—numbers of MIRVed missiles, greater accuracy and reliability of the U.S. SLBMs, and greater numbers of manned bombers—compensate for the larger size of the Soviet strategic missile force. But these American advantages appear to be rapidly declining in significance. The Soviets have been testing and deploying their own MIRVed missiles since 1973. Due to the larger size of the new generation of Soviet missiles and their huge payload, the Soviets will be able to deploy a substantially larger number of MIRVed warheads on land-based missiles than the U.S. Moreover, these warheads will be larger than their American counterparts, thus compensating in considerable measure for the superior accuracy of American re-entry vehicles. The SS-18 alone can carry up to ten two-megaton warheads. The American *Minuteman*, by way of contrast, deploys only three warheads of 170 kilotons apiece. Furthermore, the Soviets are increasing the rate of production of their new swing-wing *Backfire* bomber, which, depending on the flight plan followed and the payload carried, can reach most strategic targets in the United States from bases in the Soviet Union. At current production rates, the Soviets will for the first time have more strategic bombers than the United States as early as 1982, whatever decision the Carter administration and Congress ultimately make about procurement of the B-1 bomber. Soviet air defense capabilities raise questions

about the effectiveness of existing U.S. strategic bombers. The Soviets have more than 12,000 surface-to-air missiles in their inventory (the U.S. has none) and more than 2,600 interceptor aircraft as well.

The Soviets recently began testing of a new sea-launched strategic missile, the SS-N-18, which deploys MIRVed warheads substantially larger than their counterparts deployed on U.S. *Polaris* and *Poseidon* missiles. In this area as well, therefore, U.S. advantages are rapidly evanescent. Finally, while the Carter administration debates the future of the U.S. Navy's long-range *Tomahawk* cruise missile, the U.S.S.R. continues to test, and is apparently about ready to begin deployment of, its own long-range cruise missile, the SS-N-12; its range may extend to 2,000 nautical miles or more, although the Soviets claim that it should be exempted from the proposed SALT ban on cruise missiles.

Neither is it plausible to argue that any SALT agreement which will prove acceptable to the U.S.S.R. will improve the position of the U.S. in the strategic equation. The principal effect of the SALT I agreement of 1972 was to limit deployment of the highly-promising U.S. ABM system and freeze the Soviet numerical advantage in numbers of strategic missiles, especially large missiles, while at the same time permitting the U.S.S.R. to proceed with its massive strategic force modernization program. The Vladivostok Accord, should it become the basis for a permanent follow-on agreement, would not at

all limit this Soviet modernization process, which, when completed, will provide the U.S.S.R. with a dangerously high-confidence first-strike capability against the U.S. land-based missile force. While the Carter proposals for a comprehensive arms pact appear to include significant limits on the Soviet right to deploy new large missiles, these proposals have been explicitly rejected by the U.S.S.R. for exactly that reason. There is little likelihood that SALT II as finally concluded, therefore, will rescue the U.S. from the catastrophically deficient SALT I.

In any case, and perhaps most ominously of all, there are now solid indications, based not on textual analyses of Soviet military writings but on actual Soviet behavior, that the U.S.S.R. has definitively rejected the view commonly held by American defense intellectuals that no nation could survive a nuclear war. In recent years the Soviet Union has undertaken a civil defense program of highly significant proportions. Not only have the Soviets hardened their strategic communications centers, their nuclear weapons depots, and their military facilities in general, but underground bunkers are being provided for most industrial facilities in the U.S.S.R. as well. Of course it is possible to argue that this effort constitutes an exercise in futility—there is no doubt that if a nuclear war were to occur in the near future, every Soviet city could be burned to the ground, with population losses

in the tens of millions—but the Soviet CD program nonetheless clearly demonstrates that the U.S.S.R. adheres to a philosophy of war and a strategy for the nuclear age which is startlingly different from our own. In sharp contrast to American strategists and statesmen, the Soviet leadership clearly believes that nuclear war might occur, and is preparing to fight such a war and win it should that happen.

This conviction doubtless explains the steady growth in the rate of expenditure for defense purposes in the U.S.S.R. over the past several decades. The increase in that rate of expenditure over a twenty-year period has amounted to three to five percent annually, regardless of external or internal conditions. In periods of "detente" and in periods of high international tension, during periods in which the Soviet domestic economy is functioning smoothly and during periods in which the Soviets have encountered severe economic difficulties, the rate of increase has remained the same. The poor Soviet harvests of the early 1960s and of the early 1970s, for example, coincided with massive deployments of new missile systems, and consequent increases in defense expenditures. Kissinger's 1973 prediction that "soon the economies of the two superpowers will be so intertwined that detente will become irreversible" was followed almost immediately by the onset of a Soviet missile deployment program which former Secretary of Defense Schlesinger characterized as "staggering in its extent and scope." Since 1964, Soviet defense spending has increased over 40 percent in real terms, while that of the United States has declined 18 percent in real terms.

The conventional military balance appears even more unfavorable for the United States than does the strategic balance. That should surprise no one, since the conventional balance has favored the Soviet Union overwhelmingly since the end of World War II.

One important measure of military strength is total men under arms. The United States currently has just over two million, while the Soviet Union has nearly four and one half million in uniform. To be sure, military personnel in the U.S.S.R. perform a variety of tasks which in the U.S. are handled by civilians; nevertheless, the gap is startling. A more specific indicator of the conventional balance is the number of combat divisions in the armed forces of each superpower. The U.S. now has nineteen divisions, including the Marines, while the Soviet Union has 170—two more than a year ago. While it is true that Soviet divisions are somewhat smaller than their U.S. counterparts, the disparity is nonetheless a useful indicator of comparative conventional strength. During the past decade, the Soviets have added about one million men to their force structure - 130,000 of which directly face U.S. and NATO forces across the central front on the Continent. They have, moreover, increased the size of their divisions by nearly 3,000 men, the density of tanks deployed in each division by nearly 40 percent, and the conventional artillery deployed with each division by at least 50 percent and in some cases even 100 percent. As a result, twenty Soviet divisions today are the equivalent of twenty-five to twenty-seven divisions of ten years ago. It is worth noting that the United States has a total of 11,600 tanks in active service, while the Soviet Union has at least 45,500. New assault and attack-type helicopters, improved infantry combat vehicles, self-propelled artillery, mobile rocket launchers, precision-guided anti-tank weapons, and T-72 main battle tanks are all presently being deployed by the U.S.S.R. in large numbers, especially in Europe.

A similar situation exists in the area of tactical air power. Not counting approximately 3,000 trainer aircraft and the 2,600 fighters previously mentioned, which are assigned to

the air defense forces, the tactical air inventory of the Soviet Union - including fighters, attack aircraft, intermediate range bombers, and reconnaissance aircraft - now numbers more than 5,000 planes. A substantial proportion of these are assigned to the NATO theatre. Finally, Soviet tactical air power in Europe is backstopped by an intermediate-range missile force of 600 launchers, now being significantly upgraded through the deployment of the mobile and MIRVed SS-20 IRBM. As a consequence of these and similar deployments of new technology weapons the often-cited U.S.-NATO advantage in tactical nuclear systems is clearly declining.

There can be no doubt, therefore, that the overall conventional military balance between the superpowers has worsened appreciably during the past several years, especially in Europe. The situation does not markedly improve if Allied forces are added to U.S. theatre capabilities. And most serious commentators agree that should the U.S.S.R. launch an attack across the Central Front with a reasonable degree of tactical surprise, they would overwhelm NATO defenses and reach the English Channel within a startlingly short time. In the past, the West could rely upon its strategic superiority over the U.S.S.R. to deter such an attack. That superiority no longer exists.

In the area of naval strength, I note that ten years ago the Soviets had no missile-carrying cruisers; today they have 22. Ten years ago they had 12 missile-carrying destroyers and destroyer-like vessels; today they have more than 40. Ten years ago the Soviet Union had 45 nuclear-powered submarines; today they have more than 130. Finally, after a decade of determined shipbuilding effort, the Soviets have deployed their first true aircraft carrier and have under construction at least three more. The capability of the Soviet Navy has become so significant that the recently retired Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Elmo Zumwalt, doubts whether the U.S. Mediterranean fleet could successfully deal with its Soviet counterpart in the event of war in Europe today. In an especially alarmist appraisal, General George Keegan, recently retired chief of Air Force Intelligence, asserts that in the event of war 75 percent of the free world's surface fleets would be destroyed by Soviet forces, naval and air, within a matter of hours.

In any case there is no longer any question concerning the Soviet ability to contest the American presence in any part of the world beyond our shores. The Soviet defense efforts that I have described have radically altered the nature of the U.S.S.R.'s military strength, transforming what was once essentially a continental force into one of global capabilities, capable of supporting Soviet foreign policy all over the world and directly intervening anywhere from Central Africa to the Caribbean. The observation of President Carter that "we're still by far stronger than they are in most means of measuring military strength" has nothing whatever to do with reality.

To be sure, it is possible to argue that I have presented in these remarks an overly alarmist view. There is no doubt that the United States still retains a mighty strategic striking force, which in fact has been improved in several important ways over the force we deployed as recently as five years ago. Neither can there be any doubt that under present circumstances a pre-emptive Soviet strategic strike upon the United States would be an act of folly.

Nevertheless, the analysis of extant trends in the strategic balance set forth above suggests that in the not distant future the U.S.S.R. may well possess the capability to destroy the bulk of the U. S. ICBM and bomber force in a first strike utilizing only a portion of its MIRVed heavy missile force. Most of its land- and sea-based missiles could be held in

serve to deter an American retaliatory strike in the unlikely event that it should be threatened. That possibility carries profound consequences for the stability of the international system and for American security. At the very least the likelihood of direct Soviet challenges to and threats against U. S. interests abroad will increase substantially.

It is worth recalling, as the German strategic thinker von Clausewitz reminded us 175 years ago, that power is not only the capacity to destroy, it is also the capability to influence, and that weapons have uses that far transcend the making of war. Not only is war a continuation of politics by other means, Clausewitz instructed us, but the acquisition and deployment of military forces in peacetime are - or should be - primarily governed by political considerations. From the time of Lenin down to the present day the leadership of the Soviet Union has closely studied Clausewitz. And from the time of Lenin down to the present day the exercise of influence in peacetime has been one of the primary purposes governing Soviet force deployments.

In recent years Soviet leaders have quite openly called attention to the political purposes which inspire the U.S.S.R.'s military buildup, informing us that the world correlation of forces has shifted irrevocably in the direction of the socialist world: the United States retreat from Vietnam, the abortive U.S. response to the Cuban invasion of Angola, and the

Soviet Union is likely to behave as circumspectly as did the United States when it possessed the strategic advantage, and for the same reasons: the leaders of the U.S.S.R. are no more anxious than those of the U. S. to set off a nuclear holocaust. Moreover, it is argued, the Soviets have proceeded cautiously in the past in their efforts to translate military power into political advantage, and can be expected to behave similarly in the future.

These arguments appear to me to be singularly unpersuasive. As I have suggested above, there is no reason to believe that the Soviet leaders think about nuclear war or about the relationship between military force and foreign policy in the manner of most American defense intellectuals. Even more significant is the fact that until recently the Soviet Union has been distinctly inferior to the West in strategic power. The world has no experience with a Soviet Union which possesses substantial military advantages over the United States, and it would be dangerous in the extreme to assume that her growing military power will have little or no impact on Soviet behavior in international politics.

American Political Influence Diminishes

I have laid such great stress on the state of the contemporary military balance between the United States and the Soviet Union because military strength is the most obvious



American acceptance of Soviet numerical superiority in the SALT I Accords, all proved quite conclusively, they have asserted, that the United States is in the process of accommodating itself to the emergent international order in which the Soviet Union is the pre-eminent power.

American leaders from Kissinger to Carter, of course, have argued that the Soviet leaders are wrong, and that the United States, in the words of former President Ford, is still second to none in the primary indices of international power. In reaching your own conclusions as to who has the better of this debate, I ask you to reflect upon the attitudes and behavior of American decision-makers during two of the most important international crises of the postwar period, the Hungarian revolution and its aftermath in 1956 and the Cuban missile affair of 1962. If you investigate these events you will discover that, despite the overwhelming strategic superiority that the United States enjoyed over the Soviet Union on both occasions, U. S. decision-makers proceeded with considerable circumspection and even trepidation, fearful that vigorous U. S. action might set off World War III - a war which, under the prevailing circumstances, the United States could not possibly have lost. Reflect, therefore, upon the likely behavior of the United States during a future crisis after the strategic advantage has passed to the Soviet Union.

To be sure, some commentators have suggested that the

indicator of national power. Ample portents of the decline of the United States as a global power, however, can be found in the political realm as well.

It is worth examining the view increasingly held abroad of the United States' power and influence. Since the defeat of the United States in Vietnam and our abortive response to the Angolan crisis, there has appeared in the European press, especially in France and the Federal Republic of Germany, an outpouring of concern about the willingness and ability of the United States to sustain a coherent foreign policy. European foreign correspondents now regularly speak of "the eclipse of American power," "the withdrawal of the U. S. from world politics," "the paralysis of American foreign policy," "the rise of neo-isolationism in America." *Stem*, West German's largest magazine, stated flatly in its special supplement honoring the American Bicentennial that "the American era is past."

According to a recent study by the United States Information Agency, doubts about the ability of the NATO alliance to protect Western Europe in the face of the growing Soviet threat have tripled in Italy over the past five years, nearly doubled in West Germany and France during a similar period, and drastically increased elsewhere in Europe as well. Even Western European officials, who customarily take an upbeat view of prospects for the West in public pronouncements, are now having second thoughts, and are openly voicing their

concern about the future of NATO and the prospects for a meaningful East-West detente. The growing malaise in Western Europe doubtless has had an impact upon the startling growth in the political strength of the left-wing parties in Italy and more recently in France, and the prospects for an accession to power of a government of the left have increased substantially in both countries during the past eighteen months.

Even in the Eastern Mediterranean, where Greece and Turkey were formerly bastions of NATO strength with a long history of suspicion of Soviet motives and resistance to Russian imperialism, the situation in the past eighteen months has alarmingly deteriorated. Against the strongly-stated desires of its NATO allies, Turkey recently allowed the new Soviet aircraft carrier *Kiev* to pass through the Black Sea straits, in direct violation of the Montreux Convention — the latest in a series of Turkish attempts in recent months to build a more friendly relationship with its colossus to the north. In part, of course, recent Turkish policy is a result of dismay over U. S. policy towards Cyprus, but in part Turkey is simply accommodating itself to the prevailing winds in international politics, perceiving that as the power of the U. S. and NATO decline relative to that of the U.S.S.R., Turkey can hardly afford poor relations with the Soviet Union.

All over Europe the prospects for "Finlandization," as recently as two years ago widely considered to be a fantasy of American pessimists, are now being widely discussed. The term "Finlandization" refers to the prospect that the states of Europe, incapable of defending themselves in the face of overwhelming Soviet military superiority, will gradually modify their political behavior and even their internal political systems to suit the convenience and the desires of the Soviet Union, as has the nation of Finland throughout the postwar period. The facts concerning Finland's relationship with the U.S.S.R. bear recalling. When the term of Finnish President Urho Kekkonen legally ended in 1974, Soviet Secretary General Brezhnev publicly demanded that he remain in office lest the regularly-scheduled general elections result in the selection of a president of Finland less likely to submit to Soviet desires on significant domestic and international issues. As a result of Brezhnev's demand, the nationwide presidential elections were cancelled and Kekkonen's term was extended four more years by an act of Parliament. Reacting to both internal and external criticism, Kekkonen recently declared that elections will be held in 1978, but it has become apparent that this is a triumph of form over substance: already all major parties, including the Conservatives, have announced that Kekkonen will be their candidate. All this has occurred not because of the strength of the Finnish Communist party, which has never received more than 25 percent of the popular vote in any Finnish election, but because of direct external pressure by the Soviet Union. Once again, I ask you to reflect upon future possibilities.

How would a Communist-governed Italy behave in the face of similar Soviet pressure, or for that matter a Socialist-Communist coalition government in France? And should the dominoes begin to fall in the rest of Europe, how would the Netherlands behave? There a political party leader proposed that the Dutch army should be reduced to one man, Russian-speaking, whose sole task would be to telephone to Moscow the announcement of the Netherlands' surrender in the event of a Soviet invasion of Western Europe. He received nearly 20 percent of the vote in a recent parliamentary election.

The situation is only slightly more promising in the Far East. In Japan, for example, there is widespread confusion and alarm over continued evidence of U. S. determination to continue its military withdrawal from Asia. Discussion has begun on the alternatives open to Japan, including accommodation to Soviet and Chinese power and the acquisition of nuclear arms.

In the Third World, American influence is probably at an all time postwar low. Events at the meeting of "non-aligned nations" in Sri Lanka in the summer of 1976 offer an instructive illustration. Attendees at the conference included such well-known "neutral" nations as Cuba, North Korea, North Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Angola. The Philippines were accorded only guest status, and South Korea was not permitted to attend at all. The final statement of the conference called for withdrawal of all U. S. forces from South Korea and complete Panamanian control of the isthmus canal. U. S. military bases in Latin America were condemned as "a threat to the peace and security of the region"; there was of course no mention of Soviet bases in the Middle East or along the edge of the Indian Ocean littoral. The member states called for an end to Puerto Rico's "colonial status," while of course not mentioning the colonial domination of the Baltic states by the Soviet Union, of Tibet by Communist China, and the like.

In the United Nations as well the developing world appears to be rapidly moving toward positions on world issues favored by the Soviet Union. On the twenty-six votes identified by the State Department as key issues during the past seven years, only thirteen nations voted consistently with the United States. More than 100 nations, about two-thirds of the total, voted with the Soviet Union and against the United States more than 50 percent of the time.

I could go on at length, but I believe the picture is clear. The era of American pre-eminence, in which the United States actively employed its military and economic strength to protect nations around the world against aggression and revolution, has passed. The United States is now hard pressed to defend its own vital interests beyond its borders. Should the military trends described above continue to develop as they have during the past five years, even that may be beyond us in the not-distant future.

The Reasons for America's Decline

What then explains the decline of the United States from a position of global pre-eminence to its present status? Needless to say, it is not possible to identify the reasons in detail or with precision within the space allotted to me here. Several factors, however, deserve mention. First, it is worth observing that to a certain extent the changes which have occurred in the global power balance have been beyond the capacity of the United States to alter. The breakup of the European colonial empires in the 1950s and 60s, the relative decline of Europe itself as a center of global power and influence, and the subsequent emergence of new power centers — particularly those of the emerging nations able to exploit for their own advantage rich natural resource bases or fortuitous geographic positions — have all combined to change the structure of world politics in ways which have both reduced the relative power of the United States and complicated our security problem.

Moreover, the Soviet drive for world preeminence, and especially the attempt of the U.S.S.R. to acquire superpower military capability, would have occurred even if the United States had pursued the wisest of policies throughout the postwar period. Short of pre-emptive war, there was little that the U. S. could have done to prevent the Soviet Union from becoming a military superpower capable of offering serious challenges to United States interests.

In the final third of the twentieth century, however, it has become obvious that the American democratic system itself is in some respects an impediment to the development of a coherent and intelligent international policy. Commentators from Thucydides and de Tocqueville to Henry Kissinger have remarked upon the difficulties which democratic societies

encounter in the foreign policy arena. Some of the problems stem from the dynamics of two-party competition, which appear to require that the out-party reject the policies of the party in office, whatever their merits; the abrupt shifts of personnel in top decision-making positions which occur as a result of the electoral process in democratic societies; the opportunities afforded interest groups to influence the policy process; and finally, the desire of the populations in democratic states to exploit the political process to improve the material conditions under which they live. The advent of welfare democracy and its increasing drain on the financial resources of democratic governments has complicated matters by creating pressures to reduce defense expenditures during periods of relative peace.

These are problems, however, which all the democratic states of the West face in common. The American nation, as a consequence of its own special origins and political history, bears additional burdens. These burdens stem from the American political character itself, and from our traditional assumptions about the nature of world politics and the American role in the international political system. Not only has the United States assumed, as the rhetoric which I quoted at the outset clearly indicates, that as a new kind of society we are uniquely qualified and destined to help remake the world in the American democratic image, but we have tended to assume that ultimately force can be banished from history and that the United States can avoid continuing participation in what we have always disparagingly referred to as "international power politics."

These ideas and assumptions have been reinforced by the impact of modern liberalism on the American political outlook. The belief in the perfectability of man and in the possibility for the radical amelioration of the human condition which lies at the core of the liberal political outlook makes it difficult, if not impossible, for liberal statesmen to accept the permanence of conflict in world politics. Thus, when in power, liberals are reluctant to ascribe evil or aggressive intentions to the Soviet Union, and find it difficult to understand the continuing role of power, especially military power, in international politics.

Conclusion: Can America be "Born Again"?

The rather gloomy analysis set forth above should not necessarily lead to the conclusion that the United States is doomed, destined to follow Greece, Rome, and the British

Empire into the dustbin of history. The long-term trends, nevertheless, are not encouraging. Neither is there any sign at the moment that the new administration possesses the grasp of international realities necessary to set the United States on a new path, although of course it is too early yet to draw any firm conclusions. Whatever the nobility of Mr. Carter's pronouncements on human rights, moral rhetoric is no substitute for policy, and it remains to be seen if the Carter human rights policy is more than rhetoric and if so, what its implications are. Although he has spoken out with a vigor which the world has not recently heard from an American president on the continued violations of the Helsinki agreement, the United Nations charter, and the elemental laws of human decency generally by the U.S.S.R., he has thus far said nothing about similar violations of human rights in such communist states as Cuba, Vietnam, and North Korea. In fact, he has proposed that the United States pursue a policy of detente with all three nations. Neither can we be certain that the relatively well-designed American arms control proposals presented to the Soviets in Moscow recently represent the administration's final position on strategic policy. Finally, Mr. Carter's stubborn determination to withdraw U. S. ground forces from Korea, in the face of clear evidence that his policy might seriously upset the strategic stability of Northeast Asia, is the most discouraging evidence to date that ideology rather than a realistic grasp of the imperatives of world politics will be the primary animus of this administration's foreign policy.

More than a decade ago, in one of his most illustrious books, a well-known professor of international politics wrote cogently of the relationship between power, principle, and world order. "Whenever 'peace' conceived as the avoidance of war," he wrote, "has been the primary objective of a group of powers, the international system has been at the mercy of the most ruthless member of the international community. Whenever the international order has acknowledged that certain principles could not be compromised even for the sake of peace, stability based on an equilibrium of forces was at least conceivable." That professor was a man whom I am not accustomed to praising, named Henry A. Kissinger. The hour is now late, but there is still time for the U. S. to base its foreign policy on that insight, and to substitute for a policy of detente at almost any price the difficult decisions and sacrifices necessary if the American republic, and the civilization of the West of which it remains the acknowledged leader, is to survive and flourish.